PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 20 Number 1 January 2023

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, 29th January 2023, 6.00AM: Ameenpur Lake. Meeting Point: Miyapur Metro Station, 5.30AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 97388-40070)

Ameenpur is a beautiful and serene spot that is home to a wide variety of birds, making it a great destination for an outing. A man-made lake created for the purpose of providing drinking water to the city, Ameenpur also serves as a prime habitat for various bird species, including migratory ones.

This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Strict Covid protocols will be followed, so please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. Deccan Birders T-Shirts and caps will be available for sale.

Report: Birds of Chennayyagunta, Tirupati, January-December 2022

Text & Photos: Sita Susarla

A view of Chennayyagunta, with Tirumala Hills in the background

The Seshachalam Hills in Tirupati are an exciting bird haven. We moved to the town of Tirupati a year ago and almost immediately began to look around for bird habitats near our home on the outskirts of the town. Luckily for us a small wetland, at walkable distance from our home at Green City, Chennayyagunta, was a great find. In fact, it was like backyard birdwatching for us and we would walk around this place whenever we had some time.

Chennayyagunta is located in the Urban mandal of Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh. Most of this area is a marshy habitat with clayey soil. The wetland-like area, measuring about 15 acres approximately, is filled with hydrophytic plants like cattail reeds and different grasses, and is bordered by many weed plants like Lantana, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Calotropis procera*, *Cassia auriculata*, Prickly Pear Cactus and trees like *Pongamia pinnata* (*Kanuga* tree), Copper Pod and Neem, to name a few. Adjacent to it there is also a lake, parts of which are seen as sand bars except during the rainy season when it fills up. An important feature of the Green City colony is that it houses a recently created Miyawaki Forest, the third in Tirupati District.

We made a checklist of birds of Chennayyagunta covering the period from January to December 2022, and the tally was 120 species!

The first birds that we saw were hundreds of Ashy-crowned Sparrowlarks in the grassland next to a small rainfed stream. These birds would fly around now and then like a black and white carpet in the air. The wetland area and the lake attract a number of Wood and Green Sandpipers, Little and Temminck's Stints, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Lesser Whistling-ducks, Spot-billed Ducks, Eurasian Coot, Little and Great Cormorants, Grey, Purple and Indian Pond Herons, and hundreds of Western Yellow Wagtails. The Striated Heron that we spotted here was a lifer for us.

Striated Heron

Large flock of Western Yellow Wagtail

An eye-catching sight near the lake is the presence of hundreds of Western Yellow Wagtails. We had also seen them in great numbers on the lake bund of Bortalav Lake in Bhavnagar, Gujarat.

Greater Painted-snipe female (L) and male (R)

Cinnamon Bittern

The Greater Painted-snipes were seen many times in the open in the marshy areas. In the marshes, and flying around them, we had a number of sightings of Cinnamon and Black Bitterns, as well as a lone Yellow Bittern.

Black Bittern

Yellow Bittern

Tricoloured Munia

The marshes were also home to a large number of Tricolored and Scaly-breasted Munias, while the White-rumped Munia was sighted here only a couple of times. Baya Weavers made nests on *Prosopis* plants that were growing on the edge of the marsh. There were also a few Bengal Weavers, but no nests were seen. A few Streaked Weavers were also seen occasionally.

Common Snipe

In winter months, the marshy areas attract a large number of Common Snipes. It is a beautiful sight to watch so many of them at once. Normally it is quite difficult to photograph snipes and bitterns, as they are elusive and hardly visible in their marshy habitat. But at Chennayyagunta, we would see the bitterns perched on the cattail reeds at a very close distance, and it was therefore easy taking pictures and videos of these birds.

Black-headed Cuckooshrike female

The Blue-tailed Bee-eaters are numerous during winter. Among the shrikes were Bay-backed, Long-tailed and Brown Shrikes, and also the Black-headed Cuckooshrike and Common Woodshrike. The Common Woodshrikes move around in threes and fours; one day we saw five of them perched on the wire!

Common Woodshrike

Rosy Starling & Black Drongo

The Blyth's Pipit is a winter visitor here. The migratory Rosy and Chestnut-tailed Starlings were seen only for a few days in November and were probably passage migrants.

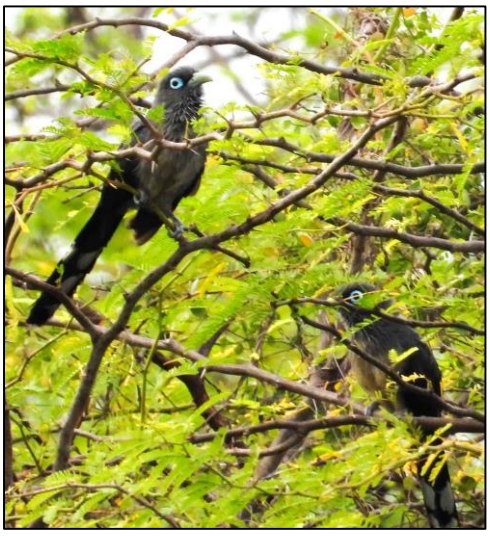
Chestnut-tailed Starling

While the Indian Paradise-flycatcher is the only flycatcher that we could sight, the warblers included Sykes's, Paddyfield, Blyth's Reed and Clamorous Reed Warblers.

Indian Spotted Eagle

Bonelli's Eagle

In the month of August, the Indian Spotted Eagle (a lifer for us), Oriental Honey-buzzard and Bonelli's Eagle were seen. Surprisingly the Black Kite is seen rarely here, indicating an absence of garbage dumps. The Blue-faced Malkoha is also common and we loved seeing the bird so much in the open.



Blue-faced Malkoha

Jacobin Cuckoo

The Jacobin Cuckoo is resident here and can be seen during all seasons. Common Hawk and Grey-bellied Cuckoos were sighted a couple of times. Coming to the doves, the list includes Red Collared, Eurasian Collared, Laughing and Spotted Doves.

Any description of the birds in this locality would not be complete without the mention of the large flocks of Yellow-wattled Lapwings that we see here. One particular day, we counted about twenty-seven of them in one flock huddled together in the grassland!

The dainty Common Kingfishers, the noisy Pied Kingfishers and the White-breasted Kingfishers always have dainty morsels in their mouths. Openbill Storks, Painted Storks and large flocks of Glossy Ibis could be seen flying overhead on an almost daily basis.

Glossy Ibis

Birdwatching is an amazing experience at Chennayyagunta, because of the abundance of species, be it wagtails, sandpipers, stints, plovers, sparrowlarks and, more so, the Common Snipes which seem to be present literally in the dozens.

The birding was exciting all year round and as the seasons changed, so would the birdlife vary. Almost every week, we would add a new species to the list of birds that we had seen at Chennayyagunta. Here's to many more!

The full list of birds seen is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	51	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
2	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	52	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*
3	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	53	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
4	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	54	Indian Spotted Eagle	*Clanga hastata*
5	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	55	Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*
6	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	56	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
7	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	57	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
8	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	58	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*
9	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	59	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
10	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	60	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
11	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*	61	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
12	Jacobin Cuckoo	*Clamator jacobinus*	62	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
13	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	63	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
14	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	*Cacomantis passerinus*	64	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*
15	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	65	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
16	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	66	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
17	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	67	Eurasian Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*
18	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	68	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
19	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	69	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psi1acula cyanocephala*
20	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	70	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
21	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	71	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Lalage melanoptera*
22	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	72	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*
23	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	73	Ashy Woodswallow	*Artamus fuscus*
24	Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*	74	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
25	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	75	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
26	Greater Painted-snipe	*Rostratula benghalensis*	76	Indian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
27	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	77	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*
28	Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	78	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*
29	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	79	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*
30	Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	80	Isabeline Shrike	*Lanius isabellinus*
31	Pin-tailed Snipe	*Gallinago stenura*	81	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
32	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	82	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	*Eremopterix griseus*
33	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	83	Jerdon's Bushlark	*Mirafra affinis*
34	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	84	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*
35	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	85	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
36	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	86	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*
37	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	87	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
38	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	88	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*
39	Yellow Bittern	*Ixobrychus sinensis*	89	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*
40	Cinnamon Bittern	*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*	90	Sykes's Warbler	*Iduna rama*
41	Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*	91	Paddyfield Warbler	*Acrocephalus agricola*
42	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	92	Blyth's Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus dumetorum*
43	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	93	Clamorous Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus stentoreus*
44	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	94	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
45	Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*	95	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*
46	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	96	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
47	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	97	Lesser Whitethroat	*Curruca curruca*
48	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	98	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*
49	Striated Heron	*Butorides striatus*	99	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*
50	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	100	Indian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
101	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	112	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
102	Chestnut-tailed Starling	*Sturnia malabarica*	113	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
103	Common Myna.	*Acridotheres tristis*	114	White-rumped Munia	*Lonchura striata*
104	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*	115	Tricolored Munia	*Lonchura malacca*
105	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	116	Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
106	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*	117	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*
107	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	118	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
108	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*	119	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
109	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	120	Blyth's Pipit	*Anthus godlewskii*
110	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*	121	Streaked Weaver	*Ploceus manyar*
111	Black-breasted Weaver	*Ploceus benghalensis*			

Some other photos taken here:

Common Kestrel

Ashy Woodswallow

Grey-breasted Prinia

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LINGERING LANDSCAPES FOR THE TALLEST FLYING BIRDS
Report: Dhanauri Wetlands, Uttar Pradesh, December 17, 2022

Text & Photos: N Shiva Kumar

A view at Dhanauri Wetlands

BC Choudhury and Nalini Choudhury were flying into Delhi from Kochi and I was flying from Hyderabad to Delhi. While we connected and discussed about our whereabouts, on the spur of the moment, we planned a flying visit to my favourite hotspot where the largest flying birds in the world thrive in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The quick trip was to check on the health of an ecological niche called Dhanauri Wetlands, nestled inside a mosaic of crop fields. Located a mere 70km from Delhi border, in Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh, this tiny group of villages offer a conducive habitat for the dwindling Sarus Cranes. If one is lucky, on any given hot summer evening, there can be over 150 Sarus Cranes roosting together, a splendid spectacle. But our trip was on the December 17, 2022, so we noticed just five of them as the rest would be far afield, foraging and feeding. Of course, a lot of other birds were seen, too.

Sarus Crane

Purple Heron

Since ancient times Sarus Cranes in India have been known not only for their extreme fidelity, but also their dramatic dance rituals, performed before and during mating, and sometimes even after the nesting season. Sarus Cranes have been explicitly painted in the pages of 'Akbarnama' (Book of Akbar), and is the official chronicle of the reign of Akbar, the third Mughal Emperor of India (1556–1605).

Presently there are three global populations of Sarus Crane thriving independently in western and northern India, Southeast Asia and Northern Australia. Sarus Cranes have been more or less decimated from our neighbouring countries, and now primarily survive by the scruff of the neck in India, explains an official from the International Crane Foundation (ICF) stationed in India.

Eurasian Hoopoe

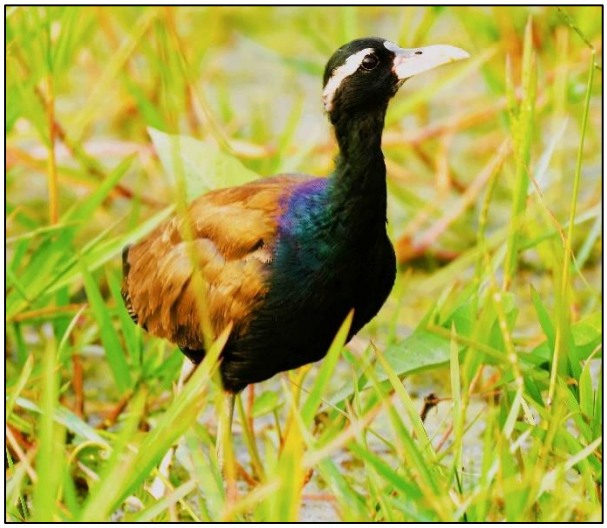
The first time I saw the splendid Sarus Crane was at the 29 sq.km Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary of Rajasthan in 1987, as two pairs walked nonchalantly with the feral cattle at Kadam-Kunj marshlands. It is not unusual to fall in love with the subject of your scrutiny, or be smitten by the distinct behaviour of a bird-of-feather, or even photo-capture them in their best feathery costumes. The Sarus Crane is no exception – it is a pleasure to watch a lovey-dovey pair, standing side by side, grooming or partaking in silent gossip. They even utter guttural calls in unison that shatter the silence of the lingering landscape and also reassure themselves of their mated status. Since that first encounter, the Sarus Crane has been my muse for three decades now.

Sarus Crane, the State Bird of Uttar Pradesh

The Sarus Crane also happens to be the state bird of Uttar Pradesh, as 70% of the population of Sarus found in India resides in the state. Interestingly the largest state of India, densely populated with about 23 crore human population, and intensely farmed, still plays a perfect host to the Sarus Cranes. The mighty, perennial Ganga River, with multiple tributaries, passes through the entire geography of UP and keeps the terrain naturally well irrigated. These waterways continuously help refresh and retain wetlands during cultivation by farmers, and this has led to the proliferation of mosaics of marshy stretches. Favourable conditions have given a geographical advantage to over 300 species of aquatic birds, particularly the dominating Sarus Cranes for feeding, breeding and brooding in Uttar Pradesh.

Professor BC Choudhury, the Executive Trustee of Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and a wetland resources professional with over 45 years of experience, is the first-generation wildlife biologist of India who spearheaded the first three national level Sarus counts 21 years ago. Presently, his involvement with the community participation in conservation of the Sarus Crane and its wetland habitats in eastern Uttar Pradesh for the last seven years has paid rich dividends. He and his team have been identifying Important Sarus Wetland Sites (ISWS) in the agricultural landscape of eastern Uttar Pradesh, as the region was long ignored by giving preference to western Uttar Pradesh.

Red-wattled Lapwing



Bronze-winged Jacana

While driving down the Yamuna express highway, towards our destination, Choudhury explained that wetlands, the primary habitats of the Sarus Crane, are facing various forms of anthropogenic pressure like reclamation of wetlands for urbanization and agriculture expansion, and intense use of Agrochemicals. Damage of Sarus nests and stealing of eggs, pestering by feral dogs as well as electrocutions further add to the threats that the tallest flying bird of the world faces.

The Sarus population is largely outside the protected areas, primarily in agriculture dominated landscape dotted with wetlands. Though the rice paddies provide the Sarus a near-natural habitat, changing cropping patterns from rice to cash crops like sugarcane have reduced their habitat. The Sarus, therefore, are now localized to areas where there is a mosaic of rice/wheat cultivation, and natural wetlands.

Northern Shoveler male

Uttar Pradesh has given the Sarus an esteemed position by declaring it as the 'State Bird'. Information is available about the population in western Uttar Pradesh and Terai region, but such information was lacking in eastern Uttar Pradesh. This information gap necessitated implementation of a project by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in 2013 with support from Tata Trusts in this region. It is meant basically to encourage and involve the community in the conservation for Sarus Cranes.

Grey-headed Swamphen

We spent two full hours at Dhanauri Wetlands, and discussed various issues regarding its protection status that need to be tackled urgently and not-so-urgently. Meanwhile, Nalini, the prolific birder, was busy preparing her checklist (attached below).

It is pertinent to mention that BC Choudhury, formerly with the premier Wildlife Institute of India (WII), spearheaded the first three national Sarus Crane surveys two decades ago. He explains that the aim was to research the ecology of the Sarus Crane and to provide the necessary base-line data towards its habitat conservation. Country-wide information on the Sarus Crane was pertinent to involve people from all walks of life, both in the preservation of the species and also spreading awareness. The intention was to obtain data about Sarus Crane on a national level and to understand the population dynamics. Though annual counts are carried out at Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary since the 1980s, nation-wide quantitative data was unavailable.

Nilgai at Dhanauri

Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and associated organisations in their three-year national Sarus Crane survey in 1999-2001 found that involvement of states and dedicated volunteers was essential to arrive at a realistic Sarus status in the country. The report, however, clearly depicts that UP has had the majority of the Sarus numbers, and the bird invariably migrated within the state with some spill-over into neighbouring wetlands in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Sarus Cranes love the countryside and evidently evolved as a bird with a clear preference for certain landscapes. With no comprehensive survey of Sarus Cranes conducted in recent years at the national level, the countrywide guesstimate of Sarus population is pegged at approximately 25000 individuals.

Dhanauri Wetlands was discovered in 2014 by Anand Arya. An ardent birder, he has regularly recorded over 100 Sarus Cranes in the last seven years at these wetlands, and also made a wonderful film on the wetlands, available of YouTube. He is now in persistent pursuit for the protection of Dhanauri Wetlands and the declaration of the area as a Sarus Crane sanctuary and Ramsar site.

The full list of birds (compiled by Nalini Choudhury) is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	37	Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*
2	Bar-headed Goose	*Anser indicus*	38	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
3	Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*	39	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*
4	Knob-billed Duck	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*	40	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
5	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*	41	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
6	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	42	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
7	Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*	43	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*
8	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	44	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*
9	Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	45	Greater Spotted Eagle	*Clanga clanga*
10	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	46	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*
11	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	47	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
12	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	48	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
13	Oriental Turtle Dove	*Streptopelia orientalis*	49	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
14	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	50	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
15	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	51	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
16	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	52	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
17	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	53	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*
18	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	54	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
19	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	55	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*
20	Sarus Crane	*Antigone antigone*	56	Indian Bushlark	*Mirafra erythroptera*
21	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	57	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*
22	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	58	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
23	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*	59	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
24	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	60	Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*
25	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	61	Jungle Babbler	*Argya striata*
26	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	62	Indian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
27	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	63	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
28	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	64	Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*
29	Asian Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*	65	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
30	Black-necked Stork	*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*	66	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*
31	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	67	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
32	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	68	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
33	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	69	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
34	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	70	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
35	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	71	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
36	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	72	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

Wood Sandpiper (Chennai, March 18 & 25, 2021)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Scolopacidae
Genus: *Tringa*
Species: *T. glareola*
Size: 18-21 cm

Description & distribution: The Wood Sandpiper is a mid-sized, long-legged wader, and the smallest member of the *Tringa* genus of shanks and sandpipers. It breeds in the sub-arctic wetlands, from the Scottish Highlands east across Palearctic Europe and northern Asia, and migrates in winters to Africa, southern Asia (especially India), South-east Asia and Australia. Vagrant birds have also been reported from the Hawaiian Islands and from Palau and Mariana Islands in Micronesia. The species name *glareola* comes from the Latin word for 'gravel', and the genus name *Tringa* comes from the name given to the Green and Solitary Sandpipers, although it is not closely related to them; rather, it is most closely related to the Common Redshank and the Marsh Sandpiper.

The Wood Sandpiper has a finely-streaked greyish-brown head, neck and breast. The throat and underparts are white, with some pale brownish streaking on the breast; the upperparts are sepia-brown or greyish-brown with a somewhat variable but strongly marked scaly pattern, while the lower back and rump are white. Bill is straight, fine and grey in colour. Lores are greyish-brown, and there is a white eye-ring and a clear white supercilium running from the bill to the nape. Legs are long and greyish-green or greenish-yellow. When in flight, white rump and barred brown-and-white tail are diagnostic. The summer (breeding) plumage is more vibrant, with heavy streaking and barring on breast and flanks respectively. Juvenile birds show warm brown upperparts with buff speckling and a lightly-streaked buff breast.

Habitat & behaviour: The Wood Sandpiper is gregarious and usually seen in ones and twos, or in small flocks, not mixed with other species. It frequents inland freshwater bodies, paddyfields, lagoons, tidal creeks, marshes, intertidal mudflats and lake edges. It typically forages by running along on the mud, picking up tit-bits, or by probing into the mud. Its diet mainly consists of beetles, termites, ants, larvae, worms and mollusks; they may also take spiders, frogs, shellfish, small fish, aquatic invertebrates and plant matter like seeds. When nervous or alert, it bobs its tail up and down like the Common Sandpiper, but not habitually. It does not usually call when on the ground, but utters a shrill *chiff-chiff-chiff* as it takes off.

Nesting: The Wood Sandpiper breeds generally between May and June in most of its breeding range in Europe and northern Asia. The typical nest is usually a scantily-lined depression on a dry patch amidst marshy, grassy areas, but it may also use abandoned tree-nests of other birds. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 pale green eggs. Incubation and parenting duties are carried out by both parents.

Local name: The Wood Sandpiper is known as *'Chupka', 'Shobaha'* or *'Titvari'* in Hindi, *'Chinna ulanka'* in Telugu, *'Kottan'* or *'Vaya ullan'* in Tamil and *'Kata kokku'* in Malayalam.

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